



American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow

Jerrold M. Packard, Jerrold Packard

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For a hundred years after the end of the Civil War, a quarter of all Americans lived under a system of legalized segregation called Jim Crow. Together with its rigidly enforced canon of racial "etiquette," these rules governed nearly every aspect of life and outlined draconian punishments for infractions.

The purpose of Jim Crow was to keep African Americans subjugated at a level as close as possible to their former slave status. Exceeding even South Africa's notorious apartheid in the humiliation, degradation, and suffering it brought, Jim Crow left scars on the American psyche that are still felt today. *American Nightmare* examines and explains Jim Crow from its beginnings to its end: how it came into being, how it was lived, how it was justified, and how, at long last, it was overcome only a few short decades ago. Most importantly, this book reveals how a nation founded on principles of equality and freedom came to enact as law a pervasive system of inequality and virtual slavery.

Although America has finally consigned Jim Crow to the historical graveyard, Jerrold Packard shows why it is important that this scourge and an understanding of how it happened remain alive in the nation's collective memory.

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